



EDUSREF 2018

Education, Society, & Reform Research
Conference Proceedings, Full Papers

Ankara, 6-7 April 2018

7.4.2018

Ozmusul, M. (2018). *Strategic Leadership in Centralized Education Systems: The Possible Dimensions*. Paper presented at Education, Society and Reform Conference: EDUSREF 2018, Ankara.

Strategic Leadership in Centralized Education Systems: The Possible Dimensions¹

Mustafa Ozmusul

Harran University, Faculty of Education

Abstract

In this study, focusing the possible dimensions I suggested a strategic leadership approach in centralized education systems. First I established a conceptual framework by the term of strategy and it's preparation process, leadership process, and the nature of the schools managed centrally. Then, I focused on the question of “what can be the possible dimensions of a strategic leadership in centralized education systems? “. In this respect, the possible dimensions of the strategic model that I offered were as follows: Determining paradigm of the strategy, developing Strategic aims, focusing on the practitioners of the strategy, including various stakeholders into the preparing strategy, pay attention to the obstacles and risks, focusing processes rather than tools, and a new discourse. To enlighten the conceptual model, the explanations for each dimension were also given.

Keywords: Strategic leadership, education systems, education policies

¹ This study is a fulltext version of the paper presented at the EDUSREF 2018 (Education, Society, and Reform Conference) in Ankara/Turkey

Ozmusul, M. (2018). *Strategic Leadership in Centralized Education Systems: The Possible Dimensions*. Paper presented at Education, Society and Reform Conference: EDUSREF 2018, Ankara.

Introduction

Centrally managed education systems face considerable challenges due to many reasons from its natural structure to policy making processes. To establish good strategy in this context for policy makers and top staff entails to show efficient leadership. Since the top level in such systems decides almost all education policies and implementations (strategic plans, curriculums, exam system selecting students into the schools, students admission to school, budgets, privatization, salaries, selecting and training staff, disciplinary policies, textbooks, staff evaluation, funding policies, etc.). For that; the top level of education systems have critical responsible to improve the education system, and should not behave randomly or unexpectedly but systematically, should care about all stakeholders; at least should not bring new serious problems into the current system. Namely, an implementing strategic leadership is needed for the top staff in the centrally managed education systems. No doubt, this task is not easy. But it can be possible to make an efficient strategic leadership through developing an understanding to the features and real needs of the system.

Before suggesting a conceptual model for efficient strategic leadership I would like to give some considerable features of the centrally managed education systems that we have already known:

What we know about the centrally managed education systems?

- The big decisions regarding teachers, administrators, curriculum, students etc. are given by the national education authority/ministry
- A minister and or his/her team can affect all the structure and climate of the system. And mostly the performing of the system equals quality of them.
- The strategy of the education system is mostly made on the desk of top level in the ministry. And it is expected that the strategy should be implemented well at the school level.
- Almost the all DNA of the education system is affected by the top level.

Ozmusul, M. (2018). *Strategic Leadership in Centralized Education Systems: The Possible Dimensions*. Paper presented at Education, Society and Reform Conference: EDUSREF 2018, Ankara.

- In such systems, the terms of the school autonomy, local curriculum, decentralization of education, financial independence etc. are not seen.
- A heavy bureaucracy has been mostly realty.
- Recruiting teacher, administrators, and the other tenure staff are performed by the ministry; the rules, conditions, in-service education possibilities are determined through the regulations
- In short, almost ever thing is determined by the national authority.

It is possible also to add more possible features of such systems. And these may differ from one country to another country; from one context to another one.

The Possible Dimensions of the Strategic Model

After given these familiar explanations about centrally managed education system, the question on the desk now is “what can be the possible dimensions of a strategic leadership in centrally managed education systems?” Based on the features of the education system given above; at least I can seven possible dimensions (Fig. 1). These are determining paradigm of the strategy, developing strategic aims, focusing on the practitioners of the strategy, including various stakeholders into the preparing strategy, pay attention to the obstacles and risks, focusing processes rather than tools, and a new discourse.

Ozmusul, M. (2018). *Strategic Leadership in Centralized Education Systems: The Possible Dimensions*. Paper presented at Education, Society and Reform Conference: EDUSREF 2018, Ankara.

The possible dimensions of the strategic model

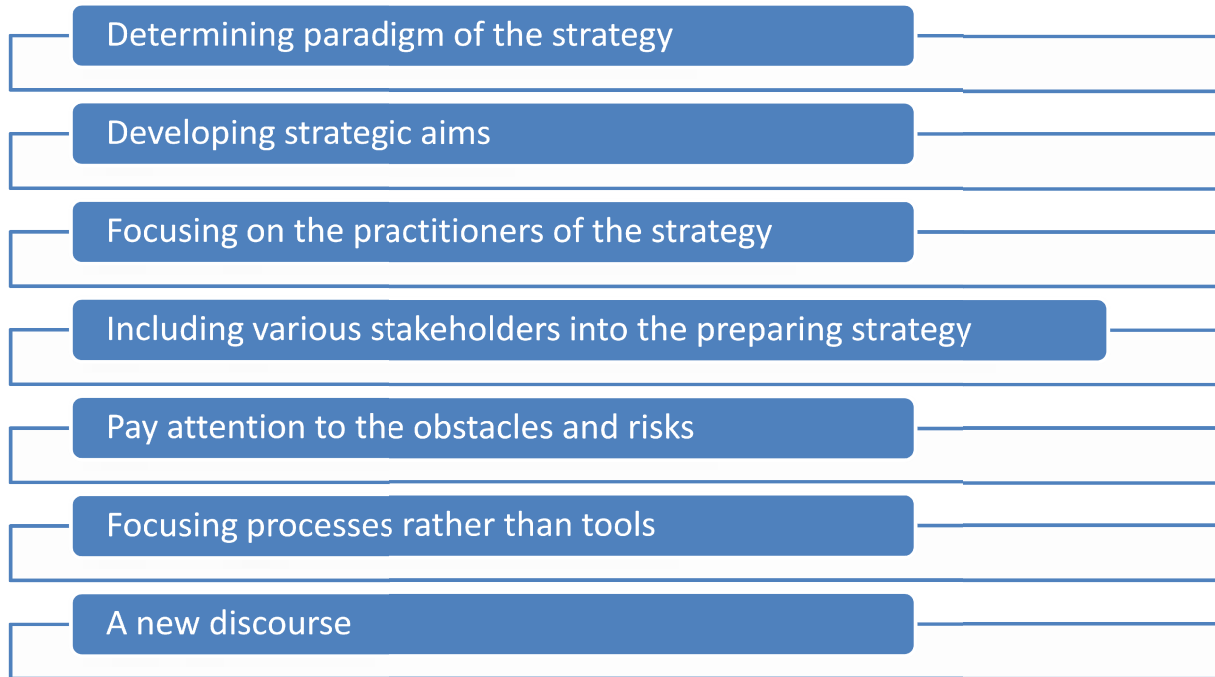


Figure 1. The possible dimensions of the strategic model

Determining paradigm of the strategy

Definition of Paradigm

“A world view underlying the theories and methodology of a particular scientific subject.”

(Oxford University Press, 2018)

Paradigm seems a philosophy or an approach, and directs the big aims, decisions, methods, theories and practices, and so on.

Ozmusul, M. (2018). *Strategic Leadership in Centralized Education Systems: The Possible Dimensions*. Paper presented at Education, Society and Reform Conference: EDUSREF 2018, Ankara.

So, What kind of paradigm do we need to establish the framework of the education strategy?
It is not easy to answer this question. May be sub-questions can be asked.

What kind of people after completing the schooling do we expect?

A religionist generation or a secular generation; a generation with a broad perspective or a generation with linear thinking; creating a destiny that low socio-economic-status means low education skills or focusing that “disadvantageousness is not a destiny”.

What kind of system do we expect?

An open system which pays attention to the local and global environment or a closed system which does not care about the facts and demands in the environment. A system focusing the compulsory skills for knowledge economy or a system focusing the invalid skills accepted in the old world.

It is possible to produce more questions to find the paradigm of the strategy.

Developing Strategic Aims,

After establishing the paradigm of strategy, specific general aims should be decided. They should be prepared so as to indicate the points that should be focused and say people what should be done. The aims should be coherent with the paradigm of the strategy, written clearly, short, vital, and prior. And also a consensus among the stakeholders should be made in deciding the strategic aims.

Focusing on the practitioners of the strategy

Some strategies fail because they are prepared on the desk at the top level of the organization. Particularly the practitioners in the education, mostly teachers and school administrators complain the education strategies because their needs and school resources are not paid attention in the strategy documents. A good strategy entails to focus on the practitioners in the

Ozmusul, M. (2018). *Strategic Leadership in Centralized Education Systems: The Possible Dimensions*. Paper presented at Education, Society and Reform Conference: EDUSREF 2018, Ankara.

field, and should be prepared through their views. Moreover, empowering school administrators and teachers, and promoting leadership in the school level are other vital issues in the process of implementing the strategy.

Including various stakeholders into the preparing strategy,

Education is a social institution which is surrounded and affected by the other institutions such as health, economy, security, business, and so on. In turn, without learning their expectations from schools and potential roles for improving national education

It is need, but not enough to take into consideration of the view of school administrators and teachers in the process of preparing education strategy. The regarding stakeholders should be involved in the process. The NGOs, public and private institutions and organizations can make considerable contributions to the shaping the strategy.

Pay attention to the obstacles and risks,

Even though the strategy seems perfect, implementing it entails to pay attention to the obstacles and risks. These are caused from both internal and external factors of the organizations. Caring about the organizational traps, coordination problems, wrong management styles, wrong management processes, lack of resources, organizational culture resists to the innovation, biases, organizational conflicts, regional differences of institutions or schools untrained and inexperienced or incapable staff in the all positions of the organization. Furthermore, when considering chaos and complexity of the world it is not easy to implement the plans regardless their perfectness. A few mistakes certainly at least in the all plans are hidden. For that, during implementation of the strategy it is compulsory to take precaution, seek mistakes and correct them, and make minor revisions. There is no perfect plan, but there is plan which is implemented perfectly.

Ozmusul, M. (2018). *Strategic Leadership in Centralized Education Systems: The Possible Dimensions*. Paper presented at Education, Society and Reform Conference: EDUSREF 2018, Ankara.

Excessive and needless changes produce new obstacles and risks. For that reason, some problems may occur from the internal parts of the organization. New administrations may want to remove or change dramatically the old administration policies or strategy. Such attempts bring new matters. The strategy should not be changed often but be systematic.

Focusing processes rather than tools,

Tools should not be transformed in to the aims. Effective strategy requires people who focus mostly the aims rather than the tools. Especially in the bureaucratic organizations there are many protocols, rules, forms, data, documents which are waited to be entered to computer, or to be implemented, to be written, and so on... But many people may move away from the strategic aims because of focusing on a large number of tools. Excessive number of tools consumes time, energy, attention. In turn, especially the policy makers and the top administrators should be aware of the traps of bureaucracy and tools.

A New Discourse.

Especially in the centrally managed organizations, the discourse of top management have been vital. Discourse should care about the reality and needs of staff from middle to base levels. Mostly the staff expects to be seen as important, valued and not like that only their efforts are needed to improve the organization. For instance, teachers particularly work in the difficult places do not like to be educated again, reward system, appraisal of performance or other evaluation system. The new strategy or strategic leadership to develop new discourse at least that hug the all staff regardless their background. Such leaders should give true messages to all staff, they also should know to hug all people, should say real and emphasize true and real priorities in education, and how the matter are gonna be fixed.

Ozmusul, M. (2018). *Strategic Leadership in Centralized Education Systems: The Possible Dimensions*. Paper presented at Education, Society and Reform Conference: EDUSREF 2018, Ankara.

Conclusion

In this study, focusing the possible dimensions I suggested a strategic leadership approach in centralized education systems. First I established a conceptual framework by the term of strategy and it's preparation process, leadership process, and the nature of the schools managed centrally. Then, I focused on the question of “what can be the possible dimensions of a strategic leadership in centralized education systems? “. In this respect, the possible dimensions of the strategic model that I offered were as follows: Determining paradigm of the strategy, developing Strategic aims, focusing on the practitioners of the strategy, including various stakeholders into the preparing strategy, pay attention to the obstacles and risks, focusing processes rather than tools, and a new discourse. To enlighten the conceptual model, the explanations for each dimension were also given.

Ozmusul, M. (2018). *Strategic Leadership in Centralized Education Systems: The Possible Dimensions*. Paper presented at Education, Society and Reform Conference: EDUSREF 2018, Ankara.

References

Oxford University Press. (2018). English Oxford Living Dictionaries. Retrieved from <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/paradigm>